

The John Doe Times
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The John Doe Times is an on-line, electronic newsletter devoted to the Oklahoma City bombing conspiracy and coverup. It is published episodically by the First Alabama Cavalry Regiment, Constitutional Militia, and friends.

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While the chief cook is away the bottle washers pull a double....

Our Editor In Chief is taking a well deserved break from the front line and is currently celebrating the Howe victory. As circulation manager, I was volunteered for the opening. Please forgive me if I am not as witty or insightful as Mr. V. (I get this way in front of large crowds).

Well on with the show.

OKLAHOMA BOMBING FALLOUT

Carol Howe Acquittal Raises Question Of Prior Knowledge
By Edward Zehr

As the Thompson committee hearings ground on toward the August recess last week without major witnesses (most of whom are holed up in China or adjacent Pacific Rim countries) and largely ignored by the mainstream press (CNN has condescended to provide live coverage now that the most interesting part is over), an even more obscure story caught the fleeting attention of the press lords in Washington and New York: "McVeigh's Lawyers Keeping Eye On Bomb Threat Trial in Tulsa," read the headline of a Washington Post story by Lois Romano.

The story is about the trials of James Viefhaus, an alleged "Nazi sympathizer," and Carol Howe, his former live-in girlfriend, described by Romano as "a troubled former debutante from a prominent family who fell in with a bad crowd and had a swastika tattooed on her arm."

The odd couple were charged with placing a message on their answering machine around the end of last year that is alleged to contain a bomb threat. They were also charged with possessing components that could be used to build a bomb. Viefhaus was convicted on these charges after a trial that lasted about a week. The trial of Carol Howe took place last week, ending in her acquittal on all counts.

The thing that has piqued the interest of the brahmins at the Washington Post is Howe's testimony that she "had warned authorities that others were talking about blowing up federal buildings," information that she had acquired in the course of her activities as "an informer for the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF)." This, according to Mrs. Romano, who is married to a federal judge, has made Howe "a cause celebre for lawyers of convicted Oklahoma City bomber Timothy J. McVeigh and far-right conspiracy theorists."

Now, a story such as this, appearing in an establishment rag such as The Washington Post, might be cause for alarm to the "federales," (as they are known to us skulking brutes of the "far right") if the story had been pursued in that old-time tradition of investigative reporting typified by Woodward, Bernstein, Deep Throat, et al. But the feds really have little need to worry about this article, which merits their Good Hush-keeping Seal of Approval. The goodguys and badguys have been clearly labeled for the benefit of those unfamiliar with the cheer-the-hero, hiss-the-villain conventions of mainstream journalism and the story has been rigorously spun to government specs.

Still, Mrs. Romano does let drop the revelation that Howe's lawyers contend she was charged -- three months after Viefhaus -- in order to silence her when it became known that she intended to testify at the trial of Tim McVeigh, who was accused and subsequently convicted of bombing the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City.

McVeigh's attorney, Stephen Jones, offered his succinct opinion regarding the federal government's reason for indicting Carol Howe: "They wanted to make her a Typhoid Mary in the McVeigh trial."

Mike Vanderboegh who edits The John Doe Times, an electronic publication devoted largely to reprints of articles on the Oklahoma bombing and related matters, with occasional commentary by the editor, mentioned recently that the feds had sent the head of the Domestic Terrorism Section of the FBI to testify at "the little two-bit bomb threat" trials of Viefhaus and Howe. "Is there something more important here than they are letting on?" he asks.

Mrs. Romano tells us the prosecutors have assured the court that "the Oklahoma City attack has no bearing on the charges against Howe and have asked U.S. District Judge Michael Burrage to bar all references to it at her trial." She adds that neither side is able to comment on this "because a 'gag' order is in place."

Another gag order -- just as the one imposed upon the April 24 pre-trial hearing of Howe and Viefhaus was lifted, allowing a 70-page transcript of the hearings, previously sealed by the court, to be made public. J.D. Cash, writing in the July 22 McCurtain (Idabel, Oklahoma) Gazette, reveals that the transcript "suggest[s] the federal agency had advance warning of an impending attack on a federal building in Oklahoma City."

"At the hearing on April 24," writes Cash, "Howe attorney Clark Brewster was seeking an order from Federal District Judge Michael Burrage to release Howe's ATF reports and other investigative materials related to her undercover work for the government."

Burrage declined to do so, saying:

"With that McVeigh trial going on, I don't want anything getting out of here that would compromise that trial in any way."

Whereupon he sealed the transcript. That prompted Brewster to ask:

"What do you mean by compromise? Do you mean share with the McVeigh defense?"

"Yes," replied Burrage, "or something that would come up - you know, we have got evidence that the ATF took a trip with somebody that said buildings were going to be blown up in Oklahoma City before it was blown up or something of that nature and try to connect it to McVeigh in some way or something."

Carol Howe's testimony at the McVeigh trial was subsequently disallowed by the presiding judge, Richard Matsch. Thus, in a case based largely on circumstantial evidence that McVeigh had the motive and means to blow up the Murrah Building, the defense was denied the opportunity to present circumstantial evidence that others had the motive and the means to do so as well. The reason Judge Matsch gave for cutting the defense off at the knees was that he didn't want to "confuse the jury."

This was in keeping with the overall kangaroo court atmosphere of the proceeding. Early in the McVeigh trial one juror told his colleagues, "We all know what the verdict should be." Fans of "L.A. Law" might consider this grounds for a mistrial, or at least for replacing the outspokenly biased juror, but not Judge Matsch. He declined to hold hearings, or take any action on the matter. Responding to a complaint by the defense that pretrial publicity had poisoned the jury pool after the Dallas Morning News had published excerpts of documents stolen from the defense team's computer, including an alleged confession by the defendant, His Honor replied that he considered it "unwise to presume" that the entire jury pool was prejudiced.

Following the Viefhaus trial, during which reams of racist literature were placed in evidence, along with photos of Viefhaus and Howe in Nazi regalia, an alternate juror was quoted as saying that "such evidence caused him to want to vote to convict Viefhaus because of his political leanings," according to J.D. Cash. "The juror said he did not think the couple really intended to bomb any cities, as the message predicted. But he felt the couple were a danger to the community," Cash wrote.

Howe's attorney, Clark Brewster, protested that the introduction of this material was "an attempt by the prosecution to 'smear' Howe's character and convict her because of her one-time political beliefs," according to the Tulsa World.

The World reported that, "Brewster, who claims that Howe gathered the material as part of her informant duties, said the evidence was 'calculated' to get the jury to fear his client and put jurors in a mindset to send her to prison, even if the government does not prove the bomb threat and possible pipe bomb counts."

Shortly before the McVeigh trial was to begin in March Brewster questioned Angela (Finley) Graham, who had "run" Howe as an undercover agent for the ATF, regarding the intelligence project Howe had undertaken involving Andreas Strassmeir, Dennis Mahon and Elohim City.

Referring to Andreas Strassmeir, Brewster asked about "the kind of threats he made about wanting to blow up federal buildings? You were interested in that, weren't you?"

Graham gave a somewhat circuitous affirmative answer, prompting Brewster to inquire: "And Ms. Howe told you about Mr. Strassmeir's threats to blow up federal buildings, didn't she?"

"In general, yes."

"And that was before the Oklahoma City bombing?"

"Yes."

Mrs. Romano writes that, "Federal prosecutors in the McVeigh case have said privately that Howe never reported useful specific information in advance of the Oklahoma City bombing, although she adds that "Angela Graham, confirmed during a pretrial hearing that during that time Howe did tell her 'in general' that certain Elohim City residents spoke of bombing buildings."

However, the Tulsa World reported on July 30:

"In a July 16 hearing in the Howe case, Brewster claimed that -- before the Oklahoma City bombing -- Howe had warned the ATF that residents of the far eastern Oklahoma religious compound known as Elohim City were talking of a "cataclysm" in the spring of 1995 and that federal buildings in Oklahoma City or Texas were being targeted."

According to J.D. Cash, "evidence is contained in government documents outlining plans in February, 1995, for Strassmeir's imminent arrest by agents of the Tulsa office of the ATF."

But the arrest did not take place. Cash wrote, "For reasons yet to be explained, that arrest--planned for two months before the Oklahoma City bombing--was postponed, and in the wake of the bombing, apparently scrubbed."

Writing in the McCurtain Gazette, Cash alleged, "The Gazette has also located evidence that Strassmeir was immediately fingered as a suspect in the Oklahoma City bombing, but was inexplicably allowed to live in this country for nine months following the tragedy, without being interviewed by the FBI."

The London Telegraph's Washington bureau chief, Ivo Dawney recently wrote:

"What is most worrying for prosecuting attorneys is that Howe claims little knowledge of Tim McVeigh. Instead she identified from descriptions several other Elohim figures, including Mahon, Strassmeir and a bank robber, Michael Brescia, as likely bombers. But to date, although the FBI is said to have spoken to more than 20,000 individuals in America's most extensive criminal inquiry, Mahon has yet to be interviewed. Strassmeir, another suspect named by Howe, has been only cursorily interviewed in Germany by telephone."

Strassmeir, the son of a prominent German political figure, has been barred from re-entering the U. S. by the State Department. He has been living in Dublin, Ireland since last February and is said to be "socializing in Sinn Fein circles," according to the Dublin Sunday Times.

The problem for the feds is that this doesn't look right -- it just doesn't make sense. Why would the federal authorities protect a person such as Strassmeir, even ignoring the fact that his visa had expired and he was living in this country illegally? Was it because of his father's political influence? If that were the case wouldn't it be logical to suppose that they would have whisked him out of the country as soon as it became known that he was cavorting with a bunch of self-styled Nazis instead of allowing him to remain in their company for months after the Oklahoma bombing -- to get into who knows what kind of trouble?

The feds have never even attempted to explain their special treatment of Strassmeir which makes absolutely no sense unless one assumes that he was working for them. The same can be said of Mahon. Why would the federal authorities not interview him, of all people, unless they were already getting his reports? After all, he had been named by an undercover agent as a major conspirator in the Oklahoma bombing -- and they were interviewing hundreds of people who had been erroneously identified on the basis of police sketches, who had no other connection with the incident.

One point that seemed to particularly annoy Mr. Vanderboegh was

the Washington Post's slapdash account of Carol Howe's recruitment by the ATF. According to Mrs. Romano:

"Mahon said that he first met Howe in 1993 when she wrote him to say that she was interested in the white supremacist group in which Mahon has been active. By August, 1994, however, Howe was reporting to the ATF about Mahon's activities. It is unclear when--or even if--she went from sympathizer to informer."

Since Mahon had been accused by Howe of plotting to blow up federal buildings, he might not be the most objective source of information for so critical a detail as this. Nor does his standing as a former official of the Ku Klux Klan (unmentioned in Romano's account) particularly enhance his credibility.

Ivo Dawney writes that Howe drifted into the white racist movement after being accosted by three black youths. According to one account, she was thrown off a high structure, breaking both heels, and still has difficulty walking. It was after that incident she contacted a racist hotline operated by Dennis Mahon, "a leader of the so-called White Aryan Resistance group, linked to an Oklahoma commune of extremists called Elohim City," according to Dawney.

Dawney goes on to say that, "After allegedly being sexually assaulted by Mahon, she filed an Emergency Protective Order against him, thereby alerting the interest of the ATF." After being approached by ATF agent Angela Finley, Howe agreed to act as an informant for the bureau, infiltrating the White Aryan Resistance enclave at Elohim City and reporting on their plans to bomb a federal building.

Thus, it is not at all unclear when Howe "went from sympathizer to informer." However, the telling of this part of the story would not have been convenient to Mrs. Romano, who had cast Miss Howe as one of the villains of the piece. The image she sought to portray was that of a flaky, gooned-out debutante who just sort of sleepwalked her way to becoming a "racist terrorist."

But the stickiest point of all is given in the following observation by Mrs. Romano:

"An ATF agent has testified that she terminated Howe in 1995 because Howe was associating with skinheads and appeared to be mentally unstable."

A covert agent consorting with "skinheads?" Shocking. Surely undercover informants are supposed to associate only with upright members of the community whose reputations are above reproach -- members of the chamber of commerce and the clergy, for example. Agent Howe has let the side down with her awkward taste in socializing.

But then, what is one to expect? According to "an ATF agent" Howe "appeared to be mentally unstable." One might wonder about the qualifications of a random ATF agent to render such psychiatric

opinions, but in this case all such speculation would necessarily be idle -- Mrs. Romano has neglected to give us the agent's identity, much less details of the agent's medical education and time spent studying in Zurich.

McVeigh's attorney, Stephen Jones, noted that Howe had filed 70 reports while working undercover for the ATF in 1995 and had made more than 47 undercover tape recordings of white supremacists. She also took numerous polygraph tests. According to Jones, "She passed the polygraph according to the reports. They evaluated her credibility and found her to be a reliable, credible informant."

Altogether Howe is said to have passed 14 polygraph tests while working as an ATF agent. One wonders how many polygraph tests her handler Angela (Finley) Graham could pass. Testifying during the Viefhaus trial, Graham acknowledged that Howe had been "reactivated" following the Oklahoma bombing, but that this merely reflects how "desperate" the government was to catch those responsible for the bombing. (So desperate that they didn't have time to interview Strassmeir or Mahon?) Howe maintains that she had never been notified that she was "deactivated" (in March of 1995 according to Graham).

According to the Tulsa World, "The government acknowledges that ATF records reflect that Howe was an informant through Dec. 13, the day a search warrant was executed at the east Tulsa house Viefhaus and Howe shared."

Under questioning, Graham admitted that the records of the ATF show that Howe worked for them as an informant through 1996, but said that was only because her superiors would not permit her to close the books on Howe. Their reasoning, according to Graham, was that they did not want "to destroy any records that related to the Oklahoma City investigation."

In other words, the only way these brain-locked bureaucrats could indicate in their records that an informant was no longer active was to destroy the records? It is difficult to believe that even an outfit as dorkey as the ATF would maintain so ridiculous a system of record keeping. Supposing the activities of a deactivated agent became relevant to some future, unanticipated prosecution -- would they just shrug and tell the prosecutor, "Sorry, we destroyed all the records on that"? Or do they simply carry all of their deactivated informants on the records as active? Perhaps more to the point, do they really know who is active and who isn't? In this case, the issue would seem to turn on the word of Agent Graham alone.

It was, Graham said, warning to the subject, the only instance she could recall during the course of her career with the ATF that someone "so unstable" had been called back into service as an undercover agent.

And what reason was given for the conclusion that Howe was "unstable?" In February 1995 she stayed four hours in a local mental health facility where she had gone in a state of depression. According to the Tulsa World, "Howe said she

subsequently got therapy for depression she said was brought on by pressure from the ATF and the death of a child she knew in a house fire."

Under cross-examination Agent Graham admitted that she is not qualified to judge whether or not a person is mentally unstable.

The Tulsa World reported that "The prosecution also introduced evidence of a bizarre incident in March 1995 in which Howe allegedly reported that she was "pistol-whipped" by a black man."

Is this supposed to be further evidence of Howe's unsuitability as an undercover agent? Wasn't it just such an incident that convinced the ATF of her suitability as an agent and prompted them to contact her with an offer of employment?

The prosecution's entire case is riddled with such instances of double-think. Agent Graham decides that Howe is a mental basket case, totally incompetent to do the dangerous work of an undercover informant, so what does she do? She packs Howe off to Elohim City to find out who blew up the Murrah Building, knowing full well that she stands a good chance of being maimed or killed, and that her information will likely be worthless anyway, since she is so "undependable." Perhaps it's time Agent Graham had her own mental stability checked -- she could have it done while waiting for the results of her polygraph tests.

Under cross-examination, Howe's attorney Clark Brewster was able to elicit testimony from several FBI agents, "that showed Carol Howe was highly regarded by the ATF and by some FBI agents," according to the Tulsa World. Even Agent Graham was moved to write a threat assessment after the FBI blew Howe's cover by leaking her identity to McVeigh's defense team. The Tulsa World reported that, "In the assessment, Finley-Graham wrote that in the two years she had known Ms. Howe she never appeared to be overly paranoid or fearful and that her belief that she is in serious danger was likely real. Finley-Graham's advice to Howe was to take every precaution necessary to protect herself."

Agent Graham went on to emphasize the importance of Howes' work writing that she had been "the key in identifying individuals at Elohim City which is tied to the Oklahoma City bomb case."

There would seem to have been a change in the game plan between then and now. Could this be related to the fact that survivors of the Oklahoma bombing have filed a million dollar lawsuit against Graham for "failure to act" in a timely fashion to prevent the tragedy, or is she just being a good team player?

Perhaps most damaging to the government's case was the testimony of FBI agent Peter Rickel. The Tulsa World summarized the impact of his testimony:

"The testimony had the effect of showing that Ms. Howe was still an active ATF informant and highly thought of. So much so that even the FBI was calling her for information, long after the Oklahoma City bombing. It also showed, that Ms.

Howe was caught in a government run-around. The agency she worked for took her fears seriously but told her to go to the FBI. The FBI told her to go to the ATF. And no one did anything to protect her. Rickel then admitted, that given those facts it would have been an option for Ms. Howe to continue her work as a member of the white supremacist movement."

The physical evidence was described by FBI agent Ken Kaminski, who took part in the December 1996 raid on the residence of Viefhaus and Howe. He described "a length of pipe with end caps, containers marked powder, cannon fuse, citric acid and hexamine tablets," according to press reports. Under cross-examination Kaminski conceded that "the citric acid was a retail item that is used to can vegetables and the hexamine tablets are used to start camp fires. The pipe with end caps turned out to be empty," the Tulsa World reported.

And then there is the "bomb threat" on Viefhaus's answering machine. It reads:

"A letter from a high-ranking revolutionary commander has been written and received demanding that action be taken against the government by all white warriors by Dec. 15, 1996, and if this action is not taken bombs will be activated in 15 pre-selected U.S. cities."

Agent Rickel, when asked on the witness stand "whether CBS News anchorman Dan Rather would be arrested if he said the same words on the air," at first offered the opinion that Rather would be subject to prosecution, but then backed off and reversed himself, saying that Rather's status as a newsman made the situation different.

So much for the Bill of Rights. It's good of the FBI to let us know that multi-millionaire talking heads are accorded rights and privileges that are not shared by us mere commoners. Perhaps one day the agency will find the time to point out the exact section of the Constitution where this is spelled out. The intellectual acumen of FBI agents would seem to have plummeted drastically since the "bad old days" of J. Edgar. No doubt the agency has had to take on its share of tragic victims of the American educational system.

The one thing that really stands out about these trials is the pervasive smell of baloney. If Viefhaus really intended to bomb 15 U.S. cities he surely wasn't going to do it with the odds and ends found in the search of his residence. Perhaps it would be in order to test for mental instability all around, starting with the jury that convicted him. The man's politics may be odious and more than a little bit nutty, but that is hardly a reason to send him to prison. His conviction is a bit of a puzzle in light of Howe's acquittal since the evidence presented against both defendants is identical.

The trial of Carol Howe was a no-brainer. She was acquitted on all charges Friday night after the jury had deliberated for less

than six hours. This is certain to have repercussions -- a grand jury that will reconvene this month in Oklahoma City is considering the possibility that a much larger conspiracy was involved in the bombing of the Murrah Building than the federal government is willing to admit. Howe's acquittal lends credence to this theory.

The motivation of the federal authorities in bringing charges against Howe is as obvious as their motive for failing to pursue most of the conspirators involved in the bombing the Murrah Building -- they are attempting to cover their plush posteriors. The feds had prior knowledge of the Oklahoma bombing and failed to prevent it, just as they did with the bombing of the World Trade Center. About the only positive thing that can be said of this fiasco is that it provides yet another excellent reason to abolish the ATF.

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